

## **Relationship between employability and turnover intention: The moderating effects of organizational support and career orientation**

### **ABSTRACT**

This study examines the impact of self-perceived employability on turnover intention by differentiating internal and external employability, and considering the possible moderating roles of perceived organizational support (POS) and career orientation. A sample of 411 valid responses to a two-wave questionnaire survey was generated from six cities in China. Results show that external employability positively influenced turnover intention, but internal employability negatively influenced turnover intention. POS exhibited marginal negative moderating effect on the relationship between external employability and turnover intention. For employees with disengaged career orientation, external employability exerts a strong impact on turnover intention. Theoretical implications research and applied implications for management are discussed.

**Key words:** Internal employability; external employability; organizational support; career orientation; turnover intention.

## INTRODUCTION

In an environment which shapes today's work life and facilitates the development of boundaryless careers (Sullivan and Arthur 2006; M. B. Arthur and D. M. Rousseau 1996), employees are encouraged to commit themselves to lifetime employability rather than lifetime employment within one organization (Bloch and Bates 1995; A Forrier and Sels 2003). [Add research background of China's employment market, highlight the importance for our research. We need some references from our target journal, Management and Organization Review]

In China the average turnover rate in 2015 was 17.7 percent, an increase of 1 percentage points over 2012 (51job.com), and manufacturing sector has the highest turnover rate of 20.9 percent. Guan et.al. (2015) uses the theory of social exchange to investigate the interactive effects of perceived organizational career management and career adaptability on turnover intention among 654 Chinese employees. The results showed that perceived organizational career management correlated negatively with turnover intention, with the relationship mediated by career satisfaction. In spite of the above research progress not much work has been done to examine the joint effects of two predictors of internal employability and external employability on turnover intention, in particular what is the role of the moderating effect of organizational support in the relationship.

Jia, You, and Du (2011) review 259 articles published in six leading general

management and organization journals, including 43 articles from Management and Organization Review(MOR) from its launch in 2005 to 2010. Their study concludes that separate or joint contextualizations in what (i.e. concepts and measurement), how (i.e. phenomena), and why (i.e. logics) positively impact research, as measured by citation counts. Our contribution to the current literature of employee turnover is on the better understanding of how and why. Based on a sample of 279 Chinese managers Chiu and Francesco (2003) confirms that positive affectivity that reflects pervasive individual differences in positive emotionality and self-concept can predict turnover intention , and job satisfaction mediates the relationship.

As discussed by Forrier and Sels (2003) and later by Sanders and de Grip (2004) the concept of employability gradually developed over the last two decades, reflecting labor market demand and with a varied focus such as workers' knowledge and skills and the willingness to perform certain types of work. Accordingly, employability is defined as the likelihood of obtaining and retaining a job within the boundaries of the organization labor market (internal) or beyond it (external) (A Forrier and Sels 2003; A. Rothwell and J Arnold 2007).

There is growing research interest in employability and turnover intention, but empirical studies have shown mixed results (Lu et al. forthcoming; De Cuyper et al. 2011a; De Cuyper et al. 2011b; Rahman et al. 2008). One possible reason that consideration of contextual differences in the conceptualization of employability has been neglected. Perceived employability or employees' self-assessment of their

capability to obtain employment involves their personal capabilities as well as contextual factors (Anneleen Forrier et al. 2009; De Cuyper et al. 2011b). Thus the construct should be further studied based on employees' self-perceived available employment opportunities with their current employer (internal employability) versus with a potential employer in the job market (external employability) (Vanhercke et al. 2014).

Hence external rather than internal employability more likely predicts employee turnover intention. However, scholars have rarely investigated this important contextual difference, and as a result little is known about the potentially differential effects of internal and external employability on turnover intention. Furthermore, we may expect that there might be moderating factors that influence the relationship between employability and turnover intention. To the best of our knowledge the studies examining this relationship are limited to the research conducted by De Cuyper et al. (De Cuyper et al. 2011b), in which the scholars focused on work resources as the moderating factor between employability and turnover intention.

The main objective of our study is to examine the potentially differential impact of internal and external employability on turnover intention, by considering the contingency factors of perceived organizational support (POS) and personal career orientation. [For testing our conceptual model, we collected data by means of a two-wave survey with a sample of 411 employees from six cities in China's Yangtze River Delta Region, using moderated multiple regression analysis. This study makes three important contributions to understanding the intricacy of the construct employability

and its impact on turnover intention. First, Second, Third.] In the following sections, we first consider the conceptual background of perceived employability, the contextual differences between internal and external employability and develop a series of hypotheses. We then test the predictions using survey data and discuss the implications of our findings.

## **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES**

### **Relationship between Employability and Turnover Intention**

Given the significance of employability for many stakeholders, a wide range of studies have been conducted providing evidence that employee attitude acts as the main factor for turnover intention (L. M. Shore and Martin 1989; Mohamed et al. 2006; Mor Barak et al. 2006; Rahman et al. 2008; Joo 2010; Tan et al. 2007; Wang and Zhang 2010; Yu et al. 2007). Alongside these studies a stream of research has emerged pointing out to the importance of work-related factors for turnover intention (e.g. work stress, perceived organizational support [POS], and person–job fit) (Barak et al. 2001; Mor Barak et al. 2006; Moynihan and Pandey 2008; Shahzad et al. 2011; Tan et al. 2007). As indicated by Maertz and Campion (1998), employee attitude can partially predict employee turnover; however, if employee attitude is overemphasized, other meaningful explanatory factors may be neglected.

Rahman et al. (2008) identified that employees' perception of job opportunities positively predicted employee turnover intention. De Cuyper, Van der Heijden, and De Witte (2011) concluded that employability positively influenced employees' turnover intention (De Cuyper et al. 2011b). Hom, Caranikas-Walker, Prussia, and Griffeth (1992) identified that employees' perception of the difficulty of changing jobs or obtaining alternative job opportunities was moderately positively correlated with turnover intention (Hom et al. 1992). In contrast Cuyper et al. (2011) discovered that employees' employability did not influence turnover intention (De Cuyper et al. 2011a). Mixed

evidence was presented regarding the relationship between employees' employability and their turnover intention.

Employees with high employability often actively manage their own careers and seek superior job opportunities (either internally or externally) that can enable them to feel self-worth (Sullivan 1999). Perceived employability is a self-concept which is based on self-evaluation. Self-concept is an important source of intrinsic motivation for action (Shamir et al. 1993). According to Higgins' (1997) regulatory focus theory, the motivational principle that underlies 'self-regulatory' behavior such as approaching pleasure and avoiding pain is regulatory focus. Given the two types of regulatory focus, the promotion focus (first type) is concerned with positive outcomes and the individuals are eager to pursue potential success, in contrast, whereas the prevention focus (second type) is concerned with security or avoiding failure and the individual tends to use vigilant strategies guarding against mistakes in order to ensure safety and maintain a satisfactory state (Higgins 1997). The study by Scholer et al. (2014) shows that more positive self-evaluations support the promotion focus, whereas less positive self-evaluations support prevention focus. Following this regulatory focus theory, individuals who perceive themselves to have a high level of internal employability may adopt a promotion strategy within their current employer to advance their career success, whereas individuals who believe themselves to have high external employability will have a promotion focus on the external job market for their career advancement, thus:

*H1a: Employees' internal employability negatively influences their turnover intention.*

*H1b: Employees' external employability positively influences their turnover intention.*

### **Moderating Effect of Perceived Organizational Support**

Perceived organizational support (POS) is defined as employees' perception regarding the organizations' recognition of their contributions, and determines how the organization supports their endeavors regarding available employment opportunities (Eisenberger et al. 1986). In accordance with social exchange theory (Blau 1964), in cases when an organization highly values, looks after and rewards its employees, the employees will reciprocate via commitment and effort (Eder and Eisenberger 2008; L. Shore et al. 2009b). Committed employees are not likely to seek employment outside their organization even if they possess high external employability, while extensively encouraged and supported to complete work related tasks in time and with minimum stress, thus strengthening normative commitments (Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002; Hochwarter et al. 2003; Riggle et al. 2009; Chen et al. 2005).

Conversely a stream of research focused on individual characteristics mainly shaped by culture and value orientation suggests that some employees have stronger commitment than others. As for employee-supervisor relationships Farh et al. (2007) provided China specific evidence that commitment is stronger when power distance is less evident. Similarly the results of the research conducted by Kamdar et al. (2006) in oil industry in India suggested that employees treated in similar ways may commit themselves differently due to personality differences (perspective taking and wariness),



which supports the notion that employees work to fulfill their perceived obligations with the organization. Further study by Shore et al. (2009a) targeting employees in a large company in Korea highlighted the importance of social exchange for positive employee attitudes and revealed that economic exchange on its own may have negative effects on affective commitment and turnover intentions.

Given the substantial exchange of tangible and intangible resources within an organization, employees eagerly develop distinguishable exchange relationships with their partners (Loi et al. 2009). When the element of social exchange is perceived by the employees at high level, the relationships are robust and underpinned by trust, mutual investment, affective organizational commitment, long term orientation and reciprocal arrangements between the employee and the organization (L. Shore et al. 2009b).

Despite some speculation in the literature about the potential risk of employees with high employability trying to leave their employer (Elman and O'Rand 2002; De Grip et al. 2004), when employees believe that their organizations value their contributions and aspirations, they use their internal employability to enhance the organization's productivity, while enhancing their own competence and expertise and they are willing to remain with their current employer (Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002). Thus:

*H2a: POS moderates the negative relationship between employees' internal employability and turnover intention.*

*H2b: POS moderates the positive relationship between employees' external employability and turnover intention.*

## **Moderating Effect of Career Orientation**

Career orientation refers to employees' personal values and attitudes towards their career and reflects work related opportunities and expectations during the course of their lifetime (Gerpott et al. 1988). The concept of traditional career orientation (D Guest and N Conway 2004) assuming employees consider job security and loyalty to their organizations crucial and aim to develop vertically within one organization was split up into two types: traditional-promotion oriented and traditional-loyalty oriented (M Gerber et al. 2009).

The former type implies the willingness of the employee to climb up the hierarchical ladder achieving the career success, whereas the latter embraces the prevailing elements of job security for the employees and long term employment within the organization. The traditional career orientation has been extended to include independent and disengaged types of career orientation (Marius Gerber et al. 2009b; M. Arthur and D. Rousseau 1996).

Independent career orientation combines aspects of 'boundaryless' (M. B. Arthur and D. M. Rousseau 1996) and 'protean' (Hall 1996) career and characterized by frequent changes of employer, when an employee possesses an active attitude, tends to transfer jobs and professions often, displays loyalty to themselves rather than to the organization and values the self-management of their careers (D Guest and N Conway 2004). Disengaged career orientation means that employees consider personal life to be more crucial than their career and strive to maintain work-life balance, however they may occasionally be work-centered (Marius Gerber et al. 2009b; Tschopp et al. 2013;

Marius Gerber et al. 2009a). Employees typically act differently when provided with external opportunities depending on the type of their career orientation. Gerber et al. (2009) provided evidence that employees with independent career orientation exhibited the highest intention to leave, followed by those with disengaged career orientation and then by those with traditional career orientation (Marius Gerber et al. 2009b; Marius Gerber et al. 2009a). Thus:

*H3a: Career orientation moderates the relationship between employees' internal employability and turnover intention.*

*H3b: Career orientation moderates the relationship between employees' external employability and turnover intention.*

The empirical results are:

- 1. Traditional/promotion career orientation** does **not** perform a moderation role on internal employability and turnover intention, but it has a significant moderation effect on external employability and turnover intention (No/Yes)
- 2. Independent career orientation** has negative moderation effects on both the relationships between internal employability and turnover intention, and between external employability and turnover intention. (Yes/Yes negative)
- 3. Traditional/loyalty career orientation** has a moderation effect on internal employability and turnover intention, but **not** on the relationship between external employability and turnover intention. (Yes/No)
- 4. Disengaged career orientation** does **not** perform a moderation effect on the relationship between internal employability and turnover intention, but does

have a marginal moderation effect on the relationship between external employability and turnover intention. (No/Yes, similar to Traditional/promotion career orientation).

## **METHOD**

### **Sample and procedure**

We collected our data from a sample of employees from six cities in China's Yangtze River Delta Region (Nanjing, Suzhou, Nantong, Changzhou, Taizhou, and Yancheng). The questionnaires were distributed in two waves. In the first wave, demographic variables, employability, and perceived organizational support were measured; and in the second wave, career orientation and turnover intention were measured. The two waves were separated by one week. On the first page of the questionnaire, detailed instructions were provided and the participants were informed of the research purpose and assured of the anonymity of participation. Only four zip-code digits and the final four digits of the participants' cell phone numbers were required (e.g. "0094, 5361").

A total of 550 pairs of questionnaires were distributed. For the first and second rounds of the survey, 512 and 486 questionnaires were returned, respectively. After pairing, 465 pairs were obtained. The return rates for the first and second rounds were 93.1% and 88.4%, respectively; the return rate for the pairing of the questionnaires from the first and second rounds was 84.5%. The questionnaire pairs that were incomplete or exhibited obviously irregular or contradictory answers were removed (54 pairs). Overall, 411 valid questionnaire pairs remained for an overall valid return rate of 74.7%. Table 1 shows the profile of the participants.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

## Measures

*Employability.* We adopted the scale for employees' self-perceived employability developed by (A. Rothwell and J. Arnold 2007). We hereafter used the term 'overall employability' when referring to this construct. It contains two sub-constructs: internal employability and external employability. The measurement was based on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = totally disagree and 5 = totally agree) comprising 10 items; among them were four items about internal employability (e.g. "Among the people who do the same job as me, I am well respected in this organization") and six items about external employability (e.g. "The skills I have gained in my present job are transferable to other occupations outside this organization"). The value of Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for the overall scale was .86; and the values of Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for the internal and external employability dimensions were .84 and .84 respectively.

*Perceived organizational support.* We adopted the scale for measuring perceived organizational support developed by (Shanock and Eisenberger 2006), which comprised six items (e.g. "The organization values my contribution to its well-being" and "The organization shows very little concern for me"). A 7-point Likert scale was used (1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree). The value of Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for this scale was .79.

*Career orientation.* This study adopted the career orientation scale widely used in the literature (Marius Gerber et al. 2009b). This scale comprised nine items and used a

dichotomous forced-choice method (e.g. “Being employable in a range of jobs vs. having job security” and “Commitment to yourself and your career vs. commitment to the organization”). The participants were required to choose based on the prospects of future careers. In accordance with the research of (David Guest and Neil Conway 2004), the Mplus 7.4 statistical software was employed to classify the measures into four types: traditional/ loyalty, traditional/ promotion, independent, and disengaged career orientation.

*Turnover intention.* The employee turnover intention scale was adopted from (Hui et al. 2007). This scale comprised three items (e.g. “It is very possible that I will look for a new job next year”). A 7-point Likert scale was used (1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree). The value of Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  was .64.

*Control variables.* The demographic variables were used as the control variables, including sex (1 = men and 0 = women), age (1 = below 25 years, 2 = 25–35 years, 3 = 36–45 years, 4 = 46–55 years, and 5 = above 55 years), education level (1 = below senior high school, 2 = senior high school, 3 = college, 4 = Bachelor’s degree, 5 = Master’s degree, and 6 = doctorate or above), and employment position level (1 = operational employee, 2 = first line manager, 3 = middle manager, and 4 = senior manager).

The reliability and validity of the scales used in this study have been verified previously in empirical studies. We used a translation-back-translation method to develop our questionnaire in the Chinese language. Two coworkers with high English proficiency were first invited to translate the original English scales into Chinese.

Thereafter, a bilingual scholar with a PhD degree in industrial psychology and work experience in an English speaking country was invited to back translate the Chinese scales into English. The back-translated English scales were compared with the original English scales. Inconsistencies were discussed and modified (the translation-back-translation process was repeated for considerably inconsistent parts) to produce a final version of the Chinese scales.

### **Statistical methods.**

SPSS 19.0 and Mplus 7.4 were used to perform internal consistency reliability analysis, confirmatory factor analysis (L. M. Shore and Martin), latent class analysis (LCA), descriptive statistical analysis, correlation analysis and moderated multiple regression analysis (MMR).



## RESULTS

### Confirmatory Factor Analysis

We used chi-squared value ( $\chi^2$ ), degree of freedom ( $df$ ), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), comparative fit index (CFI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) as the goodness-of-fit indices to assess the construct validity of the scales (i.e. employability, career orientation, POS, turnover intention). As shown in Table 2, the construct validity of the scales used in this study was acceptable.

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

### Latent Class Analysis

Latent class analysis (LCA) is a statistical technique that integrates latent variables and categorical variables and is used to explore latent class variables hidden behind explicit class variables (Meng et al. 2010). In this study, LCA was performed to statistically investigate career orientation. By performing LCA, participants were classified into groups based on the degree of similarity in the way they answered a series of items. Specifically, the participants were classified into a minimal number of groups (i.e. latent class variables) to explain differences in the item-answering styles used among the participants within a group (Marius Gerber et al. 2009a).

In LCA, the Pearson chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ), the likelihood ratio chi-square ( $G^2$ ), the Akaike information criteria (AIC) and the Bayesian information criteria (BIC) are the

main indices for model fitness. Generally, assessing goodness of fit typically begins with a single model (i.e. the number of latent classes is 1), and then the number of latent classes gradually increases. The fit between hypothetical models and observation data should be repeatedly examined to identify an optimal model (Meng et al. 2010). No significant  $\chi^2$  and  $G^2$ , and lower AIC and BIC values indicate excellent model fitness. Taking into account the effect of sample size on  $\chi^2$  and other reasons, when the fit indices appear inconsistent, BIC is a better choice (Nylund, Karen L, Asparouhov, et al, 2007).

INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

As shown in Table 3, when the number of latent classes was 4, the  $G^2$  value was not significant ( $G^2 = 420.33$ ,  $df = 472$ ,  $p = .96$ ), and the *AIC* and *BIC* values were relatively lower, especially the latter. The  $\chi^2$ ,  $G^2$ , *AIC* values for M1–4 decreased sharply, while gradually decreasing for M4-9. Meanwhile, the P-Values of Vuong–Lo–Mendell–Rubin (VLMR) and adjusted Lo–Mendell–Rubin likelihood ratio tests for 4 (H0) versus 5 classes were not significant ( $p = .19$ ;  $.19$ ). Taking these into account and in line with Gerber et al. (2009), we adopted M4 as the optimal model.

After the optimal model was determined, the names of latent classes were determined. Table 4 and Figure 1 show the conditional probabilities of nine items for the four latent classes.

INSERT TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

As shown in Table 4 and Figure 1, for Class 1, the conditional probability values on all the items where the participants chose Option 1 were very low (all below .10). For Class 2, the conditional probability values on item 2 and 4 where the participants chose Option 1 were very high (both above .60), the conditional probability values on item 1 and 7 were moderate (both between .30-.60), while the conditional probability values on other items were very low (all below .20). For Class 3, the conditional probability values on items 1-4 where the participants chose Option 1 were very low (all below .10), while the conditional probability values on items 5-9 were very high (all above .60). For Class 4, the conditional probability values on four items (item 2, 4, 6, 7) where the participants chose Option 1 were very high (all above .60), and the conditional probability values on the other five items (item 1, 3 5, 8, 9) were moderate (all between .30-.60).

Based on Gerber et al. (2009), we named the four latent classes “traditional/promotion career orientation”, “independent career orientation”, “traditional/loyalty career orientation”, “disengaged career orientation”.

### **Descriptive Statistical Analysis and Correlation Analysis**

Table 5 shows the means and standard deviations (SDs) of various variables and the correlation coefficients between variables. The results indicate that the independent variables (employability, internal employability, and external employability) and the moderator variables (POS and career orientation) were almost significantly correlated with the dependent variable (turnover intention).

INSERT TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE

### **Moderated multiple regression analysis**

Moderated multiple regression analysis was performed to explore the influence of the independent variable (employees' employability) on the dependent variable (turnover intention) and to examine whether perceived organizational support and career orientation exhibited moderating effects on these relationships.

*Moderating effect of POS.* Table 6 shows the regression analysis results regarding the moderating effect of POS on the relationship between employees' employability and turnover intention. The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) for Model 2, in which the independent variable (overall employability) was included, was .08; Model 2 explained 1% more variance in turnover intention than did Model 1 ( $F$  value for  $\Delta R^2=5.32, p < .05$ ). The adjusted  $R^2$  was .07. The  $F$  value for the overall regression model was 6.75 ( $p < .01$ ), which was significant. Overall employability exhibited a significant positive effect on turnover intention ( $\beta = .11, p < .05$ ), indicating that overall employability was positively related to turnover intention. Model 3 included the variable POS, and  $R^2$  was .23. Compared with Model 2, Model 3 explained 15% more variance in turnover intention ( $F$  value for  $\Delta R^2=77.26, p < .01$ ); the adjusted  $R^2$  was .21. The  $F$  value for the overall regression model was 19.56 ( $p < .01$ ), which was significant. POS exhibited a significant negative effect on turnover intention ( $\beta = -.48, p < .01$ ), indicating that high POS lowered turnover intention. In Model 4, the interaction term of employability and POS were included and  $R^2$  was .23. Compared with Model 3, Model 4 explained no more variance in turnover intention ( $F$  value for  $\Delta R^2=.50, p > .10$ ); the adjusted  $R^2$

was .21. The  $F$  value for the overall regression model was 16.82 ( $p < .01$ ). In addition, the interaction term exhibited no significant effect on turnover intention ( $\beta = .03$ ,  $p > .10$ ). In other words, POS did not significantly affect the relationship between employees' overall employability and turnover intention. This result did not help much in clarifying the central issues of debate in the literature on the relationship between employability and turnover.

So, we turned to examine the effect of POS on the relationship between employees' internal employability, external employability and turnover intention. The regression analysis results indicated that  $R^2$  for Model 5, in which the independent variables internal employability and external employability were included, was .12; the adjusted  $R^2$  was .10. The  $F$  value for the overall regression model was 8.86 ( $p < .01$ ), which was significant. Compared with Model 1, Model 5 explained 5% more variance in turnover intention ( $F$  value for  $\Delta R^2 = 11.75$ ,  $p < .01$ ); in addition, internal employability exhibited a significant negative effect on turnover intention ( $\beta = -.16$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and external employability exhibited a significant positive effect on turnover intention ( $\beta = .26$ ,  $p < .01$ ).  $R^2$  for Model 6, in which the variable POS was included, was .23; the adjusted  $R^2$  was .22. The  $F$  value for the overall regression model was 17.00 ( $p < .01$ ), which was significant. Compared with Model 5, Model 6 explained 11% more variance in turnover intention ( $F$  value for  $\Delta R^2 = 58.34$ ,  $p < .01$ ); in addition, POS exhibited a significant negative effect on turnover intention ( $\beta = -.45$ ,  $p < .01$ ). For Model 7, in which the interaction terms of internal employability, external employability and turnover intention were included,  $R^2$  was .24 and the adjusted  $R^2$  was .22; the  $F$  value

for the overall regression model was 14.06 ( $p < .01$ ), which was significant. Compared with Model 6, Model 7 did explain 1% more variance in turnover intention ( $F$  value for  $\Delta R^2=3.11$ ,  $p < .05$ ). In addition, the interaction of external employability and POS significantly affected turnover intention ( $\beta = .11$ ,  $p < .05$ ), while the interaction of internal employability and POS marginally significantly affected turnover intention ( $\beta = -.09$ ,  $p < .10$ ). It means POS did significantly moderate the relationship between external employability and turnover intention, and marginally significantly moderated the relationship of internal employability and turnover intention. Therefore, H1a, H1b, H2b were supported, and H2a was marginally supported.

INSERT TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE

*Moderating effect of career orientation.* The variable career orientation is a categorical variable, therefore, we changed it to four dummy variables ( i.e. traditional/promotion career orientation = 1, not traditional/promotion career orientation = 0; independent career orientation = 1, not independent career orientation = 0; traditional/loyalty career orientation = 1, not traditional/promotion career orientation = 0; and disengaged career orientation = 1, not disengaged career orientation = 0 respectively) before starting the moderating regression analysis.

As shown in Table 7, the regression analysis results regarding the moderating effect of career orientation on the relationship between employees' employability and turnover intention, the  $R^2$  for Model 2, in which the independent variable (overall employability) was included, was .08. Model 2 explained 1% more variance in turnover

intention than did Model 1 ( $F$  value for  $\Delta R^2=5.32$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The adjusted  $R^2$  was .07. The  $F$  value for the overall regression model was 6.75 ( $p < .01$ ), which was significant. Overall employability exhibited a significantly positive effect on turnover intention ( $\beta = .11$ ,  $p < .05$ ), indicating that it was positively related to turnover intention. Model 3 included the variable traditional/promotion career orientation, and  $R^2$  was .11. Compared with Model 2, Model 3 explained 3% more variance in turnover intention ( $F$  value for  $\Delta R^2=13.33$ ,  $p < .01$ ); the adjusted  $R^2$  was .09. The  $F$  value for the overall regression model was 8.02 ( $p < .01$ ), which was significant. Traditional/promotion career orientation exhibited a significantly positive effect on turnover intention ( $\beta = .18$ ,  $p < .01$ ), indicating that being traditional/promotion career orientated raised turnover intention. In Model 4, the interaction term of employability and traditional/promotion career orientation was included and  $R^2$  was .13. Compared with Model 3, Model 4 explained 2% more variance in turnover intention ( $F$  value for  $\Delta R^2=.9.31$ ,  $p < .01$ ); the adjusted  $R^2$  was .11. The  $F$  value for the overall regression model was 8.35 ( $p < .01$ ). In addition, the interaction term exhibited a significant effect on turnover intention ( $\beta = .18$ ,  $p < .01$ ). In other words, traditional/promotion career orientation did significantly affect the relationship between employees' overall employability and turnover intention. Similarly, independent career orientation exhibited a significant negative effect on turnover intention ( $\beta = -.37$ ,  $p < .01$ ), traditional/loyalty career orientation exhibited a significantly positive effect on turnover intention ( $\beta = .15$ ,  $p < .01$ ), while disengaged career orientation exhibited a marginally significantly positive effect on turnover intention ( $\beta = .09$ ,  $p < .10$ ). Furthermore, independent career orientation did

significantly negatively affect the relationship between employees' overall employability and turnover intention ( $\beta = -.36, p < .10$ ), traditional/loyalty career orientation affected the relationship between employees' overall employability and turnover intention significantly positively ( $\beta = .15, p < .01$ ), while disengaged career orientation's effect was not significant ( $\beta = .08, p > .10$ ).

INSERT TABLE 7 ABOUT HERE

Table 8 shows the moderating effect of career orientation on the relationships between internal employability, external employability and turnover intention. The regression analysis results indicated that  $R^2$  for Model 2, in which the independent variables internal employability and external employability were included, was .12; the adjusted  $R^2$  was .10. The  $F$  value for the overall regression model was 8.86 ( $p < .01$ ), which was significant. Compared with Model 1, Model 2 explained 5% more variance in turnover intention ( $F$  value for  $\Delta R^2 = 11.75, p < .01$ ); in addition, internal employability exhibited a significantly negative effect on turnover intention ( $\beta = -.16, p < .01$ ) and external employability exhibited a significantly positive effect on turnover intention ( $\beta = .26, p < .01$ ). Model 3 included the variable traditional/promotion career orientation, and  $R^2$  was .14. Compared with Model 2, Model 3 explained 2% more variance in turnover intention ( $F$  value for  $\Delta R^2 = 9.40, p < .01$ ); the adjusted  $R^2$  was .12. The  $F$  value for the overall regression model was 9.09 ( $p < .01$ ), which was significant. Traditional/promotion career orientation exhibited a significantly positive effect on turnover intention ( $\beta = .15, p < .01$ ), indicating that being traditional/promotion career



orientated raised turnover intention. In Model 4, the interaction terms of internal employability, external employability and traditional/ promotion career orientation were included and  $R^2$  was .16. Compared with Model 3, Model 4 explained 2% more variance in turnover intention ( $F$  value for  $\Delta R^2 = 4.55$ ,  $p < .05$ ); the adjusted  $R^2$  was .14. The  $F$  value for the overall regression model was 8.21 ( $p < .01$ ). In addition, the interaction term of external employability and traditional/ promotion career orientation exhibited a significant effect on turnover intention ( $\beta = .13$ ,  $p < .01$ ), but the interaction term of internal employability and traditional/promotion career orientation did not. In other words, traditional/promotion career orientation did significantly affect the relationship between employees' external employability and turnover intention.

Similarly, independent career orientation exhibited a significantly negative effect on turnover intention ( $\beta = -.34$ ,  $p < .01$ ), traditional/loyalty career orientation and disengaged career orientation both exhibited a significantly positive effect on turnover intention ( $\beta = .21$ ,  $p < .01$ ;  $\beta = .10$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Furthermore, independent career orientation did significantly negatively affect the relationship between employees' internal employability, external employability and turnover intention ( $\beta = -.33$ ,  $p < .01$ ;  $\beta = -.15$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Traditional/loyalty career orientation affected the relationship between employees' internal employability and turnover intention significantly positively ( $\beta = .27$ ,  $p < .01$ ), but did not affect the relationship between external employability and turnover intention. While disengaged career orientation affected the relationship between employees' external employability and turnover intention significantly positively ( $\beta = .06$ ,  $p < .05$ ), it did not affect the relationship between internal

employability and turnover intention.

INSERT TABLE 8 ABOUT HERE

## DISCUSSION

This study shows that overall employability exhibited a significant positive effect on turnover intention. By differentiating internal and external employability, we revealed contrasting results to the effect of overall employability. Our empirical evidence showed that employees with high internal employability tend to seek promotion with current employer; and that employees with high external employability are likely to leave their current organizations for more favorable career development elsewhere.

The results of our analyses indicate that POS significantly and negatively influenced turnover intention, indicating that employees who perceived that their organizations highly valued their contributions or interests did not easily exhibit turnover intention. By examining the interaction effect of overall employability, we found that POS did not significantly affect the relationship between employees' overall employability and turnover intention. Yet, when we look closely by examining the internal and external employability as two separate constructs, the results indicated that the moderating effect of POS mainly existed between external employability and turnover intention, but it had only marginal moderation effect between internal employability and turnover intention.

**Here are the key findings regarding career orientation – to be rewritten with references to the literature (no updates from this point forward).**

- 1. Traditional/promotion career orientation** does not perform a moderation role on internal employability and turnover intention, but it has a significant moderation effect on external employability and turnover intention (No/Yes)

2. **Independent career orientation** has negative moderation effects on both the relationships between internal employability and turnover intention, and between external employability and turnover intention. (Yes/Yes negative)
3. **Traditional/loyalty** career orientation has a moderation effect on internal employability and turnover intention, but not on the relationship between external employability and turnover intention. (Yes/No)
4. **Disengaged career orientation** does not perform a moderation effect on the relationship between internal employability and turnover intention, but does have a marginal moderation effect on the relationship between external employability and turnover intention. (No/Yes, similar to Traditional/promotion career orientation).

Regarding the effect of career orientation, our results indicated that for employees of all three career orientation types, internal employability significantly and negatively influenced turnover intention. The negative influence of internal employability on turnover intention was the most significant among employees with traditional career orientation, followed by those employees with disengaged and independent career orientation. This may be because employees with traditional career orientation tended to develop themselves within one or a few organizations, possess high internal employability conducive to their development within the current organization, and hence be unwilling to leave their organizations. Employees with disengaged career orientation hope to balance work and life; high internal employability helps them competently perform their current jobs, thus ensuring that they have time to enjoy life.

Employees with independent career orientation tend to seek career development and success and to self-manage their careers. If these employees possess high internal employability, they can competently perform their current job within their organizations, and be successful in their careers within their organizations. Accordingly, these employees generally tended to remain at their organizations. Our results show that only those employees who are high in external employability but have disengaged career orientation tend to leave their current employer, and employees with other career orientations tend to remain loyal to their organizations despite there being external opportunities.

### **Implications for management**

The study has several important implications for investment in staff employability and retention. First, the study shows that the link between internal employability helps to retain employees, while external employability has the opposite effect. Therefore organizations should attempt to develop internal employability by embedding employees' training and career development planning within the current organization's culture and structure, highlighting potential promotional opportunities within the firm. Second, the results of our study show a negative moderating effect on the relationship between external employability and turnover intention. In other words, organizational support can significantly buffer the unfavorable impact of external employability on turnover intention. This highlights the importance of providing organizational support and letting employees feel that their employer is keen on its employees' interests.

Having in place supportive human resources management practices such as work–life balance policies, family social activities and personal wellbeing programs could help to retain employees who have strong external employability. Finally, our results suggest that for employees with disengaged career orientation, external employability significantly and positively influences<sup>6</sup> turnover intention, but this is not the case for independent or traditional career orientation. Management should therefore be aware that not all employees with high external employability want to quit but only those who have disengaged career orientation are likely to jump from one employer to another. For this group of employees, the management should be cautious about investing resources in their employability development.

### **Limitations and further research**

This study has several limitations and the findings should be interpreted cautiously. First, several participants in this study were employees in state-owned enterprises. These employees were typically considered to be highly stable and loyal to their organizations. Regardless of employability level, these employees were unlikely to leave their current organizations. This phenomenon partially influenced the relationship between employees' overall employability and turnover intention. In the future, researchers should consider the homogeneity of participants and recruit employees in private enterprises as participants. Second, this study selected only two individual factors (i.e. POS and career orientation) for moderation test. Other factors could also influence the relationship between employability and turnover intention, such as

psychological contract type, leadership style (Green et al. 2011), and career commitment (Koslowsky et al. 2012). Future research can investigate additional factors that moderate the relationships between employability (both internal and external) and turnover intention.

## **CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this study was to conduct a closer examination of employee self-perceived employability by differentiating impacts of internal versus external employability on turnover intention. We tested these impacts by considering organizational support and personal career orientation as possible moderating factors. The results of our empirical work support the distinction of impacts of internal and external employability. This study contributes to the literature by helping to explicate the previous inconsistent findings on the relationship between employability and turnover intention.

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## TABLES AND FIGURE

**Table 1. Descriptive statistics of participant profile (n = 411)**

Variable	Level	Frequency	Percentage ( % )
Sex	Men	203	49.4
	Women	191	46.5
	Missing	17	4.1
Age	Below 25 years	73	17.8
	25-35 years	234	56.9
	36-45 years	75	18.2
	46-55 years	18	4.4
	Above 55 years	3	.7
	Missing	8	1.9
Education	Below senior high school	18	4.4
	Senior high school	91	22.1
	College	115	28.0
	Undergraduate	160	38.9
	Master	16	3.9
	PhD	1	.2
	Missing	10	2.4
Position	Operational	196	47.7
	First line management	62	15.1
	Middle management	82	20.0
	Senior management	36	8.8
	Missing	35	8.5

**Table 2. CFA results regarding questionnaire construct validity (n = 411)**

$\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	<i>TLI</i>	<i>CFI</i>	<i>RMSEA</i>	<i>SRMR</i>
480.27	113	.90	.93	.09	.09

**Table 3. Summary table for the goodness-of-fit indices of the exploratory latent class model (n=411)**

Model	$\chi^2$	$G^2$	$AIC$	$BIC$	$df$	<i>Number of Parameters</i>
M1:1-class model	8758.71 (.00)	1314.27 (.00)	4463.52	4499.69	502	9
M2:2-class model	2096.45 (.00)	645.29 (.00)	3857.23	3933.58	492	19
M3:3-class model	2788.23 (.00)	489.62 (.36)	3708.78	3825.32	479	29
M4:4-class model	728.75 (.00)	420.33 (.96)	3629.58	3786.31	472	39
M5:5-class model	685.60 (.00)	380.38 (1.00)	3609.63	3806.54	462	49
M6:6-class model	609.42 (.00)	346.58 (1.00)	3595.83	3832.93	452	59
M7:7-class model	579.00 (.00)	322.08 (1.00)	3591.33	3868.62	442	69
M8:8-class model	570.93 (.00)	300.90 (1.00)	3590.15	3907.62	432	79
M9:9-class model	451.69 (.15)	273.67 (1.00)	3592.44	3950.10	421	89

**Table 4. Conditional probabilities of nine items for the four latent classes (n = 411)**

Regarding your work life, which option do you tend to choose?										
Item number	Option 1	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4	Option 2
1	Being employable in a range of jobs	.04	.56	.00	.35	.96	.44	1.00	.65	Having job security
2	Managing your own career	.07	.89	.00	.75	.93	.11	.1.00	.25	Having your organization manage your career for you
3	A short time in lots of organizations	.00	.08	.01	.41	1.00	.92	.99	.59	A long time with one organization
4	Commitment to yourself and your career	.00	.65	.10	.61	1.00	.35	.90	.39	Commitment to the organization
5	A series of jobs at the same kind of level	.04	.07	.63	.50	.96	.93	.37	.50	Striving for promotion into more senior posts
6	Living for the present	.02	.11	.92	.63	.98	.89	.08	.37	Planning for the future
7	Work as marginal to your life	.00	.33	1.00	.72	1.00	.67	.00	.28	Work as central to your life
8	A career is not important to you	.00	.00	.89	.52	1.00	1.00	.11	.48	Career success is very important to you
9	Spend what you've got and enjoy it	.00	.17	.72	.46	1.00	.83	.28	.54	Save for the future

Note:  $f_{\text{Class 1}} = 63$ ,  $f_{\text{Class 2}} = 209$ ,  $f_{\text{Class 3}} = 85$ ,  $f_{\text{Class 4}} = 54$ .



**Table 5. Descriptive statistical analysis and correlation analysis (n = 411)**

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>r</i>											
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1 Sex	.52	.50												
2 Age	2.12	.78	.19**											
3 Education level	3.17	.98	-.02	-.21**										
4 Position	1.89	1.05	.11*	.20**	-.21**									
5 Overall employability	3.75	.63	.07	.11*	-.07	.02								
6 Internal employability	3.83	.75	.07	.14*	.03	-.03	.80**							
7 External employability	3.70	.72	.05	.07	-.12*	.05	.91**	.47**						
8 POS	4.97	1.02	.05	.22**	-.12*	-.04	.56**	.64**	.37**					
9 Career orientation 1	.15	.36	-.01	.10	-.11*	-.12*	.31**	.16**	.34**	.16**				
10 Career orientation 2	.51	.50	.06	.01	.24**	.21**	-.14**	.02	-.22*	.09	-.44**			
11 Career orientation 3	.21	.41	.01	-.12*	-.22**	.37**	-.01	-.11*	.06	-.12*	-.22**	-.52**		
12 Career orientation 4	.13	.34	-.08	.03	.02	-.01	-.11*	-.06	-.11*	-.15**	-.17**	-.40**	-.20**	
13 Turnover intention	3.46	1.39	-.07	-.15**	-.05	.18**	.09	-.06	.18**	-.30**	.16**	-.39*	.28**	.08

Note: \* signifies  $p < .05$ , and \*\* signifies  $p < .01$ ; Career orientation: 1-traditional/ promotion career orientation,

2-independent career orientation, 3-traditional/ loyalty career orientation, 4-disengaged career orientation.

**Table 6. Moderating effect of POS on the relationship between employability and turnover intention (n = 411)**

Variable	Turnover Intention						
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
<b>Control variable</b>							
Sex	-.05	-.06	-.07	-.07	-.06	-.06	-.07
Age	-.18**	-.19**	-.11*	-.11*	-.17**	-.11*	-.11*
Education level	-.05	-.04	-.08	-.07	-.01	-.06	-.08
Position	.20**	.20**	.16**	.15**	.19**	.16**	.17**
<b>Independent variable</b>							
Overall employability		.11*	.37**	.37**			
Internal employability					-.16**	.11†	.07
External employability					.26**	.29**	.32**
<b>Moderator variable</b>							
POS			-.48**	-.47**		-.45**	-.45**
<b>Interaction terms</b>							
Employability × POS				.03			
Internal employability × POS							-.09†
External employability × POS							.11*
$R^2$	.07	.08	.23	.23	.12	.23	.24
Adjusted $R^2$	.06	.07	.21	.21	.10	.22	.22
$F$ value	7.04**	6.75**	19.56**	16.82**	8.86**	17.00**	14.06**
$\Delta R^2$	.07	.01	.15	.00	.05	.11	.01
$F$ value for $\Delta R^2$	7.04**	5.32*	77.26**	.50	11.75**	58.34**	3.11*

Note: signifies  $p < .01$ , \* signifies  $p < .05$ , and † signifies  $p < .10$ .

**Table 7. Moderating effect of career orientation on the relationship between overall employability and turnover intention (n = 411)**

Variable	Turnover Intention									
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10
<b>Control variable</b>										
Sex	-.05	-.06	-.05	-.06	-.03	-.01	-.06	-.06	-.05	-.05
Age	-.18**	-.19**	-.20**	-.20**	-.16**	-.18**	-.14**	-.15**	-.20**	-.19**
Education level	-.05	-.04	-.02	-.03	.04	-.02	.00	-.03	-.04	-.04
Position	.20**	.20**	.23**	.22**	.13**	.14**	.12*	.13*	.20**	.19**
<b>Independent variable</b>										
Overall employability		.11*	.06	.07	.06	-.02	.11*	.08†	.12*	.13*
<b>Moderator variable</b>										
Career Orientation 1			.18**	.08						
Career Orientation 2					-.37**	-.36**				
Career Orientation 3							.23**	.22**		
Career Orientation 4									.09†	.11*
<b>Interaction terms</b>										
Employability × Career orientation 1				.18**						
Employability × Career orientation 2						-.36**				
Employability × Career orientation 3								.15**		
Employability × Career orientation 4										.08
$R^2$	.07	.08	.11	.13	.20	.31	.12	.14	.09	.09
Adjusted $R^2$	.06	.07	.09	.11	.18	.30	.11	.13	.07	.08
$F$ value	7.04**	6.75**	8.02**	8.35**	16.33**	26.38**	9.06**	9.35**	6.26**	5.72**
$\Delta R^2$	.07	.01	.03	.02	.12	.12	.04	.02	.01	.01
$F$ value for $\Delta R^2$	7.04**	5.32*	13.33**	9.31**	59.34**	69.97**	19.06**	9.94**	3.59†	2.34

Note: \*\*signifies  $p < .01$ , \* signifies  $p < .05$ , and † signifies  $p < .10$ ; Career orientation: 1-traditional/

promotion career orientation, 2-independent career orientation, 3-traditional/ loyalty career orientation, 4-

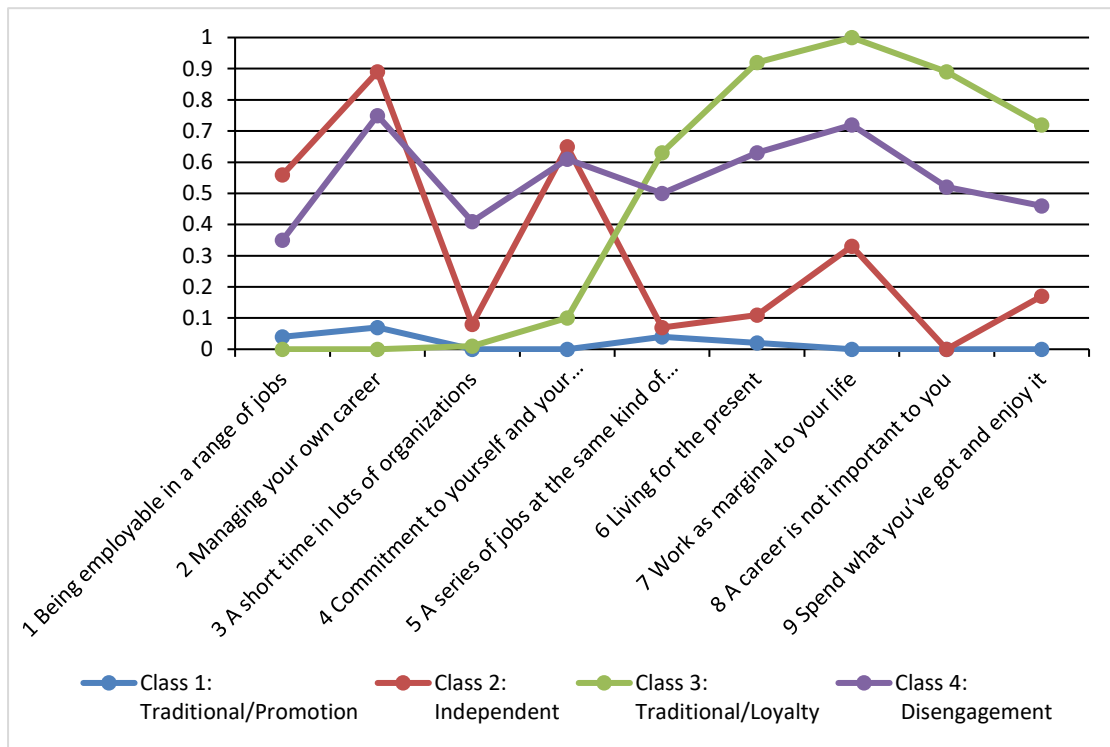
disengaged career orientation.

**Table 8. Moderating effect of career orientation on the relationship between international employability, external employability and turnover intention (n = 411)**

Variable	Turnover Intention									
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10
<b>Control variable</b>										
Sex	-.05	-.06	-.05	-.06	-.03	-.01	-.06	-.06	-.05	-.04
Age	-.18**	-.17**	-.18**	-.17**	-.14**	-.16**	-.12	-.13**	-.17**	-.17**
Education level	-.05	-.01	.00	-.01	.05	-.02	.03	-.02	-.01	-.01
Position	.20**	.19**	.21**	.20**	.13**	.15**	.12*	.15**	.19**	.18**
<b>Independent variable</b>										
Internal employability		-.16**	-.15**	-.14**	-.12*	-.27**	-.13*	-.27**	-.15**	-.15**
External employability		.26**	.21**	.21**	.17**	.18**	.24**	.28**	.27**	.27**
<b>Moderator variable</b>										
Career Orientation 1			.15**	.05						
Career Orientation 2					-.34**	-.31**				
Career Orientation 3							.21**	.19**		
Career Orientation 4									.10*	.12*
<b>Interaction terms</b>										
Internal employability × Career Orientation 1				.06						
External employability × Career orientation 1				.13*						
Internal employability × Career orientation 2						-.33**				
External employability × Career orientation 2						-.15**				
Internal employability × Career orientation 3								.27**		
External employability × Career orientation 3								.01		
Internal employability × Career orientation 4										.03
External employability × Career orientation 4										.06*
$R^2$	.07	.12	.14	.16	.21**	.37**	.15	.21	.13	.13
Adjusted $R^2$	.06	.10	.12	.14	.20**	.35**	.14	.19	.11	.11
$F$ value	7.04**	8.86**	9.09**	8.21**	15.72**	25.88**	10.14**	11.50**	8.26**	6.74**
$\Delta R^2$	.07	.05	.02	.02	.10	.15	.03	.06	.01	.01
$F$ value for $\Delta R^2$	7.04**	11.75**	9.40**	4.55*	50.40**	40.49**	15.85**	14.00**	4.27*	1.34

Note: \*\*signifies  $p < .01$ , \* signifies  $p < .05$ , and † signifies  $p < .10$ ; Career orientation: 1-traditional/

promotion career orientation, 2-independent career orientation, 3-traditional/ loyalty career orientation, 4-disengaged career orientation.



**Figure 1. Conditional probabilities for the four latent classes**

Note:  $f_{\text{Class 1}} = 63$ ,  $f_{\text{Class 2}} = 209$ ,  $f_{\text{Class 3}} = 85$ ,  $f_{\text{Class 4}} = 54$ .

